

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW

ENC. V.

School District: Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

in response to

COORDINATED PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT FINDINGS

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Report Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Criterion Number: MOA 7B

For each finding of the Department of Education, please provide:

• A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE CORRECTIVE ACTION ACTIVITIES  
THE DISTRICT WILL IMPLEMENT  
TOGETHER WITH:

- Completion dates
- Anticipated results
- Evidence of completion
- Person(s) responsible for implementation of activities
- The district's internal evaluation process for action plan activities which will assure the ongoing compliance of the district.

MOA 7B

**Structured Learning Time**

The school district ensures that its structured learning time is time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning, or assessments within the curriculum of core subjects and other subjects as defined in 603 CMR 27.02. The district's structured learning time may include directed study (activities directly related to a program of studies, with a teacher available to assist students), independent study (a rigorous, individually designed program under the direction of a teacher, assigned a grade and credit), technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments.

The district ensures that its structured learning time does not include time at breakfast or lunch, passing between classes, in homeroom, at recess, in non-directed study periods (study halls), participating in optional school programs, or receiving school services such as health screening, speech, or physical and occupational therapy, except where those services are prescribed by a student's IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan.

The hours spent in any type of structured learning time are verified by the school district. Where the school district counts independent study or a school-to-work program as structured learning time, it has guidelines that explain clearly how hours spent by students are verified.

M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1G; 603 CMR 27.02, 27.04

•Completion dates: September, 2008

•Anticipated results: Provision of 990 hours of structured learning time to all students, including AP enrollees.

•Evidence of completion: Hours verified by the Superintendent of Schools



•The district's internal evaluation process for action plan activities which will assure the ongoing compliance of the district.

#### Plan for Student Learning Time Regulations (603 CMR 27.00)

Currently in the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, the 1849 students receive an average of 850 hours of instruction per year. In order to be in compliance, each student would need to be scheduled for all seven periods, every day, all year. At present, 16% of our students meet 990. Freshmen participate in an average of 953 hours per year; sophomores, 845; juniors, 838; and seniors, 766. Given the current structure of time in learning, the high school would need to add 14.8 FTE to come into compliance with the mandate.

This year the high school was able to add 5.0 FTE teachers as a result of the School Committee's vote to become a school choice district once again. Next year, we will add another 6.0 FTE teachers, due to an anticipated increase in Chapter 70 local aid and reallocations in the appropriated budget. The 11.0 FTE teachers allow us to lower unacceptable class size averages that are the second highest in the state of Massachusetts.

While the regional school district recognizes the immediate need to move toward the 990 figure, the status of the school budget, coupled with more than a decade of population growth have left the high school with a number of competing, complex challenges for the scarce resources available.

For ten years Acton-Boxborough has been engaged in reform initiatives and restructuring activities while looking to A Nation At Risk, Breaking Ranks I and II, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the Education Reform Act for guidance and inspiration. In developing the capacity to support the very difficult work of school level change, we have met several goals including one of preparing students for an uncertain future. As we continued our search for better instruction, we reached another difficult challenge of employing technology throughout the school. We have come to appreciate the fact that our search for better instruction will never end. We also learned that we need to protect and preserve the tried and true. The staff has promoted an understanding and respect for diversity that has been absorbed into the fabric of the high school. This and other school climate issues continue to be a top priority and they will shift with changes in how we use space and time.

On May 25, 1996 Superintendent Isa Kaftal Zimmerman wrote to the Commissioner of Education, Robert V. Antonucci, "There are two major approaches to change: the revolutionary and the evolutionary. Which one is chosen depends on the particular situation, the people involved and the point in history in which the change is occurring. The Time and Learning Commission has chosen "revolution". We are using "evolution" internally because we believe that will work best for us right now..." At that time, Acton-Boxborough students averaged 823.74 hours of instruction per year. Clearly, A-B has come a considerable distance albeit with a series of stops and starts, some surges forward and a few significant steps backwards. We have reached highs of 953/913/902/884 and lows of 822/845/820/766 across the freshmen/sophomore/junior/senior "hours of yearly instruction" continuum.

The most positive aspect of our 10 year journey is that Acton-Boxborough, as a high school, is "achieving" at a level beyond all reasonable expectations. The school culture and climate foster this. High expectations in a calm, caring, challenging environment is the norm. A-B is a place that has something for everyone where students are treated as mature young adults; teachers enjoy each other, work hard and share, risk taking and experimenting are encouraged, and individual differences are expected, accommodated, and embraced.

Acton-Boxborough students are excelling regardless of the criteria or yardstick used to measure. MCAS results, SAT scores, Advanced Placement performance, National Merit recognition and college acceptance rates are among the top very few in the state. The extracurricular program is exceptional, with several viewed as the most successful in the Commonwealth (academic decathlon, football, performing arts, including speech & debate). The student and parent satisfaction levels reflect the above.

Recognizing that restructuring would not prevail unless it drew on the strengths of teachers and



other than Cambridge) are common. Department Leaders and the Registrar's Office will work with the administration to review the appropriateness of requests in this area.

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School operates 14 hours per day, 6 days per week, 12 months per year. Eighty credits are required to graduate. The typical A-B student earns 117 credits. The 1990 mandate, coupled with 2 hours per day of home study, roughly translates to 1350 hours of "education" per year. We know the average Acton-Boxborough student exceeds this time commitment with well over 100 hours to spare. Our challenge, then, is to add instructional hours and improve upon the high school experience they currently enjoy.

In two years time we will have that answer.